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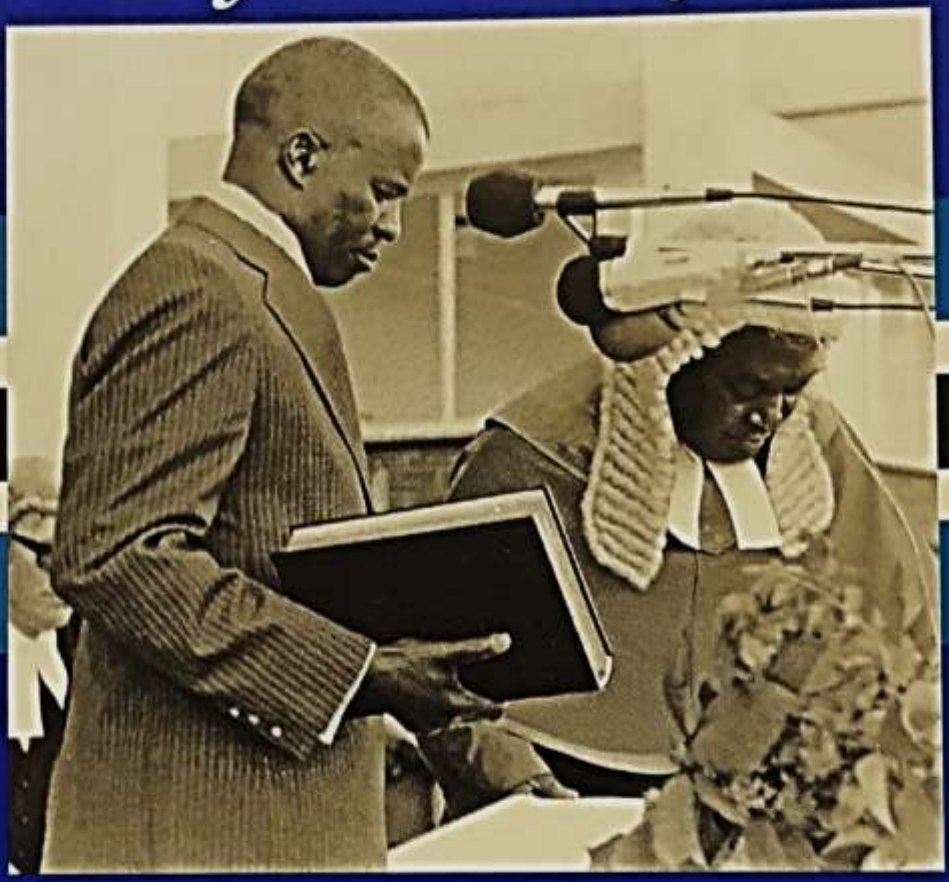

The Making of a President

Sir Ketumile Masire's Early Years

THE MAKING OF A PRESIDENT - SIR KETUMILE MASIRE'S EARLY YEARS
BARRY MORTON and JEFF RAMSAY

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INTRODUCTION

Over the past three decades His Excellency Sir Ketumile Masire has been the leading architect of modern Botswana. Yet despite his importance very little is known about him. The following account of his rise to leadership is a revised version of a nine-part series which appeared in the Botswana Gazette newspaper during July-September 1993. We are indebted to the Gazette's managing editor, Clara Taukobong Olsen, and her staff for their help in preparing the series. As was the case with our original articles, this text merely seeks to shed light on aspects of the President's early life. The material we have collected is inadequate for a more comprehensive biography. Moreover, the time is not yet ripe for such a project as some of its most important chapters belong to our present future. We also feel that the Masire presidency is still too recent to give us sufficient historical perspective, and so we stopped at 1980. But we hope that modest effort has at least made a start at describing a man with an interesting and important career.

While we have not neglected documentary sources, much of our information came from personal interviews. In addition to Sir Ketumile himself we would like to express our gratitude to those who shared their knowledge with us (see the Appendix). The President's acquaintances were able to dismiss much common misinformation about him. Indeed, the very absence of published information about this nation's public figures has led to a proliferation of false stories about many of them.

In seeking a truer picture of Sir Ketumile's rise we were constantly reminded that he is a self-made man. He did grow up in a close, mutually-supportive family and thus never went through life completely on his own. In his career Masire also benefited from his ability to

draw on the strength of others. But in the final analysis it is clear that he is an exceptionally hardworking and gifted person who has succeeded due to his own tenacity.

Barry Morton and Jeff Ramsay Gaborone, June 1994.

1. CHILDHOOD

Talented individuals can spring up from any part of a nation's soil. Sir Ketumile Masire was born into a comfortable but modest family in Kanye. That village was, and still is, the capital of the Bangwaketse people, located in what was then known as the Bechuanaland Protectorate. There was nothing about Masire's heritage that gave him any real advantage.

The first-born of Joni (or Johnny) Masire and his wife Gabaipone (née Kgopo), Ketumile was born in Kanye on the 23rd day of July, 1925. Gabaipone had retained a traditionally calm demeanour while awaiting the birth of her first child. Her husband, though, was extremely excited. She named her son Ketumile[1], after one of her uncles. Her son was also given the European name of Quett. The young boy would operate with two different names for the rest of his life. When, as was fairly common, he was given the names of his father and grandfather, he became Q.K.J. Masire.

The name "Quett" is actually a shortened version of Marquette. Another of his uncles, "Boloi" Kgopo, had an avid interest in world history. At the time of Masire's birth he had been impressed after reading about the seventeenth century French missionary-explorer Jacques Marquette.

After giving birth, Gabaipone became known as MmaKetumile. She was an outgoing, talkative, and even outspoken woman. Her family members remember her as humorous and fun to be around. She had done a few years of primary school before marriage, and used to keep an eye on the smaller girls. After marriage she was involved in agriculture and domestic work like virtually all Batswana women of that era. In her spare time, she liked to relax by making pottery, and is said to have had much talent.

Joni, likewise, was extremely jocular. His eldest son would eventually come to look a great deal like him. He was fairly short, around five and a half feet tall, slim, with solid features and a big smile. He is remembered as a straightforward man who worked hard to improve his family's prospects through wage employment and cattle keeping. Through his diligence he became the trusted right arm of his long-term employer, Richard "Montsioa" Rowland. A Coloured businessman, Rowland was by the 1930s one of the Protectorate's wealthiest entrepreneurs. As a busy mine-owner, trader, philanthropist, and adviser to the Bangwaketse chiefs, Rowland left the day-to-day running of his Kanye shop to Joni Masire. When he was in the shop, Masire senior was known to amuse customers with his good-natured humour and antics. When off duty, he would usually ride his wagon out to his cattle post at nearby Moshaneng.

The Masires were the senior family of the small Motebejana ward, located on Kanye's west side. In 1937 it had a mere hundred people. Joni's father, Masire-a-Sealetsa, was the upstanding headman of Motebejana and was known for his independent spirit. In 1936 he

[1]Literal meaning "I am famous"

was courageous enough to risk royal wrath by standing up for the judicial reforms contained in the 1934 Native Tribunal Proclamation, which was then being bitterly opposed by the Bangwaketse Kgosi Bathoen II (1928-69). Joni was Masire's eldest son, and so became headman of Motebejana in his turn.

Like the Baphiri living in South Africa, the ancestors of the Masire family and Motebejana ward were once Bahurutshe who joined the Bangwaketse sometime before the reign of Makaba II (c.1790-1824). Earlier they had stayed at Kgoro Hill, near modern-day Good Hope, during a period of chaos and famine. There they substituted phiri (hyena) for tshwene (baboon) as their family totem. Thereafter they retained the totem as a reminder of the tough times they had endured. Gabaipone's families, the Kgopos, are the direct descendants of Makaba II's father, Moleta (c.1770-90). They were not regarded as royal family members. It was a family that placed a premium on education, and a very high proportion of its members went through primary and secondary school.

For about the first three years of his life the young Ketumile lived with his mother in the Kgopo compound. At this stage his parents had still not built a house of their own. Two of MmaKetumile's sisters had had children at the same time she did and the three shared their maternal experiences together. Like most healthy and intelligent babies, Ketumile cried a lot in his first years. Allegedly he was not easy to control, and is said to have bitten his baby-sitter cousin hard on occasion.

In 1928 Joni completed a house for his family in Goo-Motebejana, and moved there at the time that his second-born child, Gabalengwe, a girl, was born. His parents would later have four more children. Basimane, Basimanyane, and Bantlohile were Ketumile's brothers, while Morufhi was his second sister. Ketumile lived at Motebejana for the next five years or so, although his grandmother often looked him after when his mother was at the lands. It was common for the women of the Kgopo family to leave their children with their mother when they went farming. As the family was large there were sometimes as many as a dozen young ones left with grandma. Ketumile's cousins insist they learned discipline and a strong sense of family from their grandmother. Children were delegated chores and were expected to carry them out responsibly. In the evenings, the children and grandma sat around telling fairy tales and mmutla (hare) stories, sang songs, and pondered riddles. One such riddle concerned the young Ketumile, who was in the habit of wearing his cap the wrong way round (like a modern rap singer). This riddle went:

"*Mokolwanyane o rwele capese?*".[2] The answer was: *"Ke Quett"*.

At about the age of eight or so, Ketumile's parents began taking him to the family cattle post at Moshaneng, a few kilometres from Kanye. Initially they stayed with him to train him themselves rather than leave him alone at the mercy of sometimes ruthless herd-boys. After some time, he was left to fend for himself, drinking milk and making his own logala (sweet porridge). He also learned to deal with his fellow herders, who had the normal tendency to harass their master's sons. Perhaps after some hard-earned experience, Ketumile became an expert with the whip.

[2]The young boy with the cap?

A common contest among herd-boys was the game of nxabi, in which two boys armed with a whip or a switch would oppose each other separated by a bush. They would then attempt to beat their opponent's shoulders and back. Masire developed an unorthodox style for these contests. While most of his opponents relied on a classic two-handed approach, Ketumile developed a formidable left-handed stroke. By the time he was in his early teens he was hard to beat, and is said to have bloodied many bigger, potentially bullying opponents while his own back and shoulders remained unscathed.

Until the age of thirteen and a half Ketumile spent his time at the moraka (cattle post). There he matured, learning to look after himself and the family cattle. In addition to routine herding chores, he indulged in the common amusements of cattle post life, such as oxen racing, hunting small animals, and organizing fights between the strongest bulls in the vicinity. In these years he developed a lifelong love of agriculture and the outdoors life.

When he went to the moraka his cousins of the same age had instead begun attending primary school in Kanye. Ketumile had wanted to join them in school, and finally had the opportunity to do so when his brothers became old enough to replace him at Moshaneng. In fact, Joni almost kept his oldest son out of school altogether. So, when he got the opportunity to attend Rachele Primary School in Kanye in 1938 Ketumile was, according to a classmate, "very serious". He was anxious to make up for lost time and to make the most of an opportunity nearly denied him.

From the beginning, Ketumile was a precocious student. He completed his first three years of school (Sub A, Sub B, and Std. 1) in two years--a record time--and soon spoke English well. After this he graduated to Kanye Senior School where his teachers allowed him to skip Std. 2. Two years later, in 1941, he was allowed to skip Std. 5. According to his aunt Bontsejang, then a teacher in the Kanye school system, it was many years before a similar student came along. People who remarked on his progress noted: *"O tla inaya sengwe"*.[3]

This quick progress was not the result of natural talent alone. One of Masire's schoolmates remembers that he studied hard even early on in primary school. "The President, even though a lad, really used to burn the midnight oil." In addition to book learning, Masire was skilful with his hands and became an excellent carpenter and wood-worker. For fun, Masire joined the Wolf Scouts.

When in 1943 he finished top of his class in Std. 6, his academic excellence was such as to enable him to earn one of a handful of Bechuanaland Protectorate Government bursaries for further education. As such, the name of Ketumile Masire appeared in the newspapers for the first time. His academic achievements even earned him a mention in Indlovu/Tlou, the news sheet for Batswana soldiers serving in World War Two. In 1943 Masire aimed to complete his secondary school education and then go to the University of Fort Hare to get a degree in Agriculture along with a teaching certificate. He had loftier ambitions than most of his Kanye peers who talked mainly of going to the mines in Johannesburg.

But before he went to university, he still had to finish Secondary School.

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[3]He's going places.

2. THE YOUNG TIGER: TIGER KLOOF YEARS 1944-49

With his government bursary in hand, the 18-year-old Masire went to Tiger Kloof Institute near Vryburg, in what was then the Union of South Africa. In 1944 there were no fully-fledged secondary schools in the Bechuanaland Protectorate. Tiger Kloof appealed to many Batswana as it was run by the London Missionary Society, popularly known as "Lontone" (today the UCCSA). The LMS had dominated Botswana's church scene since the days of David Livingstone in the mid-nineteenth century. Tiger Kloof Institute, the church's secondary school, had therefore attracted such Batswana royals as Bathoen II and Seretse Khama. Many commoners including Archie Mogwe, Gaositswe Chiepe, and Masire's aunt Bantsejang, to name a few, had also gone there. At Tiger Kloof Ketumile joined his cousin Mokwadi Kgopo who was two years ahead of him, though they were born at almost the same time.

Tiger Kloof, despite its high reputation among Batswana, was not the most comfortable place to school at. Conditions were Spartan and there was no electricity until 1948. During World War II the school suffered severe food shortages. Moreover, the staff were puritanical and paternalistic in outlook, keeping a very close eye on girl students. Male and female pupils were not allowed to associate with each other outside of the classroom.

In his first year, when he did Std. 7 (the equivalent of Form I today), Masire finished first out of 38 students. He impressed the Tiger Kloof teachers, and his headmaster wrote:

"Earnest. Keen on bible study. Should go far in the course he has set himself. Doing very well indeed."

The following year Masire joined the new Beekeeping Club, and, like the other members, kept a hive. He used his carpentry skills to build a beautiful hive, and earned some pocket money selling honey. Masire also worked in the gardens, and was keen to pick up some skills that would help him obtain his university agricultural degree. During the year he also became an LMS church member, which he has retained to this day. In his schoolwork he was again outstanding in 1945. He was second out of 41 with a lofty average of 65%.

During his holidays Masire went back to Kanye, and began to show that he was someone out of the ordinary. His qualities were such that when home he was followed around by a large group of teenage boys, who were captivated by his intelligence, his good English, his skills with his hands, and his ability to make the days interesting with varied and unusual activities. Masire's hangers-on were apparently known as the "Handymen", and one of them has related the following story to illustrate the reason he was so admired by the youngsters in his neighbourhood.

"One time when Masire was back on holiday, he, his brother Basimane, myself, and some other Handymen went out into the hills to collect the maradu (milk cattle). Quett had a rifle with him, as he liked to shoot if he had the opportunity. Along the way we spotted a big black mamba hanging under a moga tree. We were all scared, but Quett wanted to shoot the mamba. He got right under the snake and stood on one knee, just below the snake, while we all hid behind the bushes. He aimed, and then hit it right through the middle of the neck.

"It fell off the tree, right next to him on the ground. It wasn't dead and wiggled around, making a huge dust cloud. Then Basimane got out from behind the bush and jumped in to grab the snake. He and Quett got it and killed it, and there was dust everywhere."

Then Quett took the snake home, skinned it, and took the skin back to Tiger Kloof. In the Tannery shop there he made a set of snake skin shoes, and also a belt and wallet. When he came back for the next holidays, he wore them around.

In his teenage years Masire had retained his ability with the whip, and used to stand up for schoolboys when they were bullied by roughneck herd boys at the moraka. Taking the same approach, he had learned at his moraka at Moshaneng, he went around defeating bullies in one-sided nxabi contests. Thus, he defended the honour of Kanye schoolboys.

In 1946 Masire completed his Junior Certificate course, and earned a 2nd Grade pass, which was not bettered by any of his classmates. During the year he was first in his class of 35 and clearly impressed one of his teachers, who wrote:

"Conduct satisfactory . . . Shows real initiative; can take responsibility . . . Helpful and able. Should keep watch over a very quick tongue."

His headmaster was also pleased: "A very satisfactory student who should go far," he noted in a classic piece of understatement.

3. CHANGE OF PLANS

Tragedy had struck during 1946 when Ketumile's mother, Gabaipone, died. Following his successful JC results, he went home to Kanye for Christmas. During that holiday his father, Joni, also died.

As the eldest son, Masire became the head of the family. The death of parents had derailed the education of many eldest sons, but Masire decided to continue at Tiger Kloof after his bursary was extended. He accepted the offer to take his two-year matriculation course, sending the following letter to his kgosi, Bathoen II.

"Motho-wa-batho,

"Ke amogetse lwa gago lo lo bolelang ka fa phetolo ya ga Mr. Jowitt e ntseng ka teng fa o sena go rakana nae. Ke ne ka mokwalela jaaka lokwalo lo no lo re ke fetole ka teng. Ke raya lwa ga Mmakasetirata.
Ke le ngwana wa gago, Ketumile Johnny Masire."[4]

During his first year of studying for his matric, Masire began to have doubts about continuing his academic career for a long time. He told his friends that he needed to finish school quickly in order to return home and start working so he could support his brothers and sisters. Therefore, after he returned in 1948, he enrolled at Tiger Kloof to take Education courses in

[4]Your highness,
I received your letter which gave Mr. Jowitt's reply following your meeting. I replied to him as instructed in the letter. I mean Mmakasetirata's letter.
Your child, Ketumile Johnny Masire.

order to qualify as a teacher. He also continued the second year of his matriculation course as an independent candidate, and was the first Tiger Kloof student to take two courses simultaneously. Most of Ketumile's classmates were surprised that he was taking the Primary Higher Teacher's Certificate course, given that he showed he had the academic ability to continue as a Matric student.

While he was at school he was looking after his brothers and sisters' affairs as well as the family property "by remote control". This required continuous letter-writing and vigilance on his part. Meanwhile his brothers and sisters stayed with their maternal relatives, the Kgopos, while Jakopo Masire, Joni's brother, supervised the cattle. When Ketumile returned from Tiger Kloof, he would go straight to the moraka to ensure the herd was being looked after properly.

At school he was very busy. In addition to taking two courses, he was a Prefect and a member of the gardening and beekeeping clubs. He was not a star athlete, but played full-back at football and did the 220 and 440-yard sprint. Due to an interest in sports, he became the school's Sports Secretary in 1948. In this capacity he arranged a number of sports contests for Tiger Kloof's teams. Unfortunately, a polio epidemic spread through schools and most matches were called off. He wrote:

"All our hopes that we drafted in schemes were threatened and crippled by the great monster that devastated Southern Africa at the beginning of the year . . . May God help our sportsmen who are competing to be of use to Africa and use their talents to the best of their abilities."

As if Masire was not busy enough, he also debated regularly once he became a matric student. Perhaps it was for this reason that when he came across people arguing in the boarding house, he used to join in no matter what the topic was. One of his old classmates remembers him winning a fair number of these impromptu debates.

Masire's effort at taking two courses simultaneously succeeded. For his Matric exam, which he wrote independently, he received three exemptions. The rest of his classmates received one between them. Ketumile also passed his teacher's course and qualified as a primary school teacher. As Masire succeeded in this effort, a number of students were to copy his strategy in later years (including current MP Ray Molomo).

In 1949 Masire returned for his last year of schooling in order to qualify as a secondary school teacher. Although he could have taken it easy after a tough 1948, Ketumile continued to be very active. He was a member of the Student Christian Association, which used to organize trips for students to preach to poor farm workers in the Vryburg area. Masire also found the time to do some creative writing, and two of his pieces were published in the 1949 school yearbook. One of them was a poem, entitled:

THE EARTH WE PACE

Call this poetry or call this prose
But a poetic license I need must have,
For a few lines I must compose
On this whirling planet which we pace
Which keeps rolling an onward roll.

Have you ever stopped to think
Of this dynamo on which we pace?
The mighty things which it likes
Generating life from space
As it rolls a never-ending roll.

Cutting space as a cannon ball
Bores through the atmosphere.
Its speed ever in its control.
No mistake doth interfere,
Though fools deny its roll.

Powers unnumbered it doth create
Animal, plant and human lives.
Ideas good through human souls it doth create
Everything on earth that thrives
Should sing praise to this rolling ball.

Can you imagine should it stop!
What mighty chaos there would be!
On any slight mistake without stop!
All things alive or dead they be
Are sure in doom to all.

O, Copernicus thine ideas once pooh-poohed
Are highly exalted in the modern world.
Columbus thine theory did put to test.
Fear no imprisonment again great man.
Many things did thine theory prove.

What ingenious brains control the earth?
What mighty hands its reins so carefully hold?
What secret power is so unquestionably obeyed by earth?
I'll leave for better brains to judge,
All I know is that it rolls.

To me this earth is a mysterious ball.

Another composition was a short essay on the nature of mankind, called "Man by Man was Never Known."

MAN BY MAN WAS NEVER KNOWN

"Man is a puzzle to himself. View him from any perspective, and you will find out that he is complicated, and wonderfully made. . . Let us take two of the best known liars, Shakespeare and Milton, then two well-known military geniuses, Napoleon and Hitler. For all the lies the first two have told us, we respect and honour them . . . What of our military geniuses? Some of us might feel that the fires of hell are not hot enough for the two of them. Life is teeming with such instances which are a puzzle to our faculty of judgment and contradictory to our expectations. . . . There are neither virtues nor vices as such, but there is only one virtue the

reverse of which is vice. This is the right mental attitude. It is one's will not only to live but to live well that marks and guides one's onward striving. This is the magic stick or wand that turns one's vices into virtues. This is the goal that one needs to strive towards, a correct mental attitude, this is the thing, the gift of a cultivated habit of mind, the absence of which is vice."

Not everything went perfectly for the young Masire at Tiger Kloof. On one occasion he opened up his beehive at an inopportune moment and was badly stung by his bees. Classmates remember holding down a howling Masire and pulling stings out of his body. Another mishap occurred when he and other prefects were slicing bread for the rest of the students. Uncharacteristically, Ketumile cut himself severely at the thumb joint doing this duty one morning.

Masire left Tiger Kloof with a distinguished academic record. In his final year he was chosen Head Prefect and he served well. None of his classmates bettered his 2nd Grade pass for his "Primary Higher 2" exams, and he qualified to teach at secondary school level. These were high qualifications for a Motswana of his time.

When he left Tiger Kloof, the headmaster noted, "He should be a credit to the institution."

4. SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHER

After the National Party victory in South Africa in 1948, it became obvious that black education in that country was going to come under the control of a malevolent new administration. In this light Kgosi Bathoen II and the Bangwaketse School Committee decided to push ahead with the long-discussed creation of a Secondary School in Kanye.

The school was due to be open in 1950 and there was only one potential secondary school teacher in Gangwaketse. This was 24-year-old Quett Masire, fresh out of Tiger Kloof. So inevitably, Rev. Shaw of the School Committee hired Masire, long before the latter had even passed his final exams. In October he wrote to one of his colleagues:

"Chief Bathoen says that a local boy, a matriculant who is completing his NPH 2 exam this year, is willing to teach here, so I have sent him appointment papers for the new Std. VII class."

And so, in January 1950, Masire became the Acting Headmaster for Kanye Junior Secondary School (now Seepapitso II Secondary School) and also taught its first class of students. In this capacity Masire earned an annual salary of £102, which was well above the national income but way below what people with his qualifications were supposed to be paid.

The new school had problems from the beginning. Its first students, twelve in number, were almost all from outside Kanye. Most could not even afford textbooks. More importantly, the school suffered from the disorganized nature of the Bangwaketse School system. Another new school, the Kanye Teachers Training College, was also established in 1950 but had no buildings of its own. As a result, the Junior Secondary School was forced to share with the TTC, and overcrowding became serious each year after 1950.

The challenges facing dedicated teachers like Masire were considerable. Classes tended to be large, and full of students previously taught by unqualified personnel. Most of the school

buildings were decrepit--many lacked roofs, windows, desks, and textbooks--and Kanye Junior Secondary even lacked toilets for its male students. Administration in Kanye was often lax, resulting in undisciplined teachers of both sexes having affairs with students, and skipping work. Pupils also attended on a very irregular basis, and faces changed all the time. To make matters worse, Kgosi Bathoen II took an intense interest in education, and often showed up in schools unannounced and interfered in lessons and matters of discipline. Various overbearing white South African school inspectors further made teaching unnecessarily difficult.

According to the former President himself:

"The problems I faced as the first Headmaster of Seepapitso Secondary School were multiple and varied. To start with only the Chief and School Committee knew that a Community Junior Secondary School had started in the Bangwaketse Territory. No budgetary provision for the school was made, other than perhaps, provision for the salary of one teacher. I had to look for a place to use as a classroom at the King George Memorial Hall. The problem continued in the second and third years…To all intents and purposes the school was treated as just another primary school."

Masire taught his students over six different subjects, as in those days there was no specialization for teachers. He was praised by his school inspector in 1950, who felt he was "a very keen teacher, intelligent and willing to learn. He is having no disciplinary trouble with his pupils who seem keen, even if limited educationally." One of Masire's former students agrees with this assessment, noting that he "taught a wide range of subjects well." During lessons Masire often amused the class by writing on one side of the blackboard with his left hand, and then switching over to his right hand for the other side. Born left-handed, Masire had become ambidextrous while in primary school.

In 1951 a new class of students was accepted and the school's enrolment increased to twenty-five. Masire had his salary increased to £120, still being paid like a primary school teacher by the cash-strapped Bangwaketse Tribal Administration. By this time an experienced teacher had been found, and O.G. Manchwe became headmaster and the school's second teacher. Manchwe was Masire's former teacher at Tiger Kloof, where he had been a popular man known for his keen intellect.

During the year Masire was elected Secretary for the Bangwaketse Teachers' Association by his colleagues. One of his duties was to organize guest speakers. Interestingly enough, he showed at this young age an interest in politics and administration. He wrote two letters to the District Commissioner, asking him to speak to the Association. The topic was to be "Duties of Government Officials--High Commissioner, Resident Commissioner, District Commissioners, Chiefs, and Heads of Departments." Masire got his wish, and the lecture was held.

Overcrowding at the Secondary School increased when Kgosi Bathoen and the committee decided to move all of Kanye's Std. 6 pupils to the school, which more than doubled its size. Nor was the School Committee anywhere near to completing the TTC, projected for completion in early 1954 but was not built in Masire's teaching years. Poor teaching conditions prevailed.

During 1953 Masire took on added responsibility after he was elected Chairman of the Bangwaketse School Sports Association. This body aimed to set up local sports leagues and to arrange matches with schools from other areas. His election testifies to his continuing interest in sports. He played for the school football team, which travelled around southern Botswana playing teams like Kgale and Moeng. Masire was a fullback, earning the soccer name "Man Plus Ball" with his aggressive tackling.

Meanwhile the situation at the Secondary School worsened. The headmaster, Manchwe, proved to be a poor administrator and neglected his duties as he fell victim to alcoholism. Moreover, cramped conditions prevailed with some 112 students and not one of the buildings they had been promised had been constructed. In the middle of the year Manchwe resigned shortly before he was to be fired. Masire was therefore forced to step in once more as Acting Headmaster, and to take over the responsibility for Manchwe's students. In the process he had to make sense of an administrative debacle.

In 1954 a new man, Bias Mookodi, arrived as headmaster of the school, which was finally given a new site at the former Maisantwa Primary School. Mookodi was one of Masire's old Primary School and Tiger Kloof age classmates, and the two had duelled every year to be the best in class. Mookodi had in fact completed university degrees at Fort Hare in both agriculture and education, the very program that Masire had himself aspired to before his parents died. On arrival Mookodi suggested to the School Committee that Masire be kept on as headmaster due to his experience, but this request was denied.

Together Masire and Mookodi worked hard to improve the school. They came up with various ideas and then took them to Kgosi Bathoen, with whom they held many conferences. One such scheme proposed by the two young schoolmasters was to give all their students a midday meal so that they would remain at school in the afternoons to study. The idea was adopted and worked well in terms of improving study habits--prior to this the school had been empty in the afternoon. Moreover, the simple meal of samp and merogo was "very welcome" to the students, who no longer had to scrounge around Kanye for lunch. "It helped us a lot," a former Kanye student says, "before the meals program we didn't know where to go after a [lunch] break."

By 1955 the school had improved in many respects but was still far from ideal. Kanye Secondary School had grown to 165 pupils, too many for the new buildings and staff. Moreover, Kgosi Bathoen decided early in the year to reorganize the school system with no reference to the local school committee. Such was the situation when Masire decided to abandon full-time teaching in order to devote himself to his one great passion--farming. According to the School Committee's minutes:

"The Secretary read a letter from Mr. Q.K.J. Masire resigning from his employment as a teacher. The Committee felt that his leaving at this time of the year will mean a great loss to the students he is teaching. It was unanimously agreed that the Secretary should request him to stay up to the end of the year…N.B. The Secretary called Mr. Masire to his Office and explained the situation and he agreed to stay up to the end of the year."

In December 1955 Masire finally left Kanye Secondary and began a new career as a farmer. He continued to be involved in local education as a member of the School Committee into the early 1960s. During his early years as Vice-President of the Republic, he also found time for voluntary teaching.

5. RATERATA: THE MASTER FARMER

The principal reason why Ketumile Masire had left his teaching career in 1955 was that he had never given up his early ambitions to till the soil. While a student at Tiger Kloof in the late 1940s, Masire had told friends about his desire to improve the family's herd and to practice new techniques on his lands. All the time that he was teaching, he was also an avid reader of Farmer's Weekly, which was then his "Bible". He longed to try modern farming methods out, and so every Friday he got on his bicycle and went to Hildavale to get training as a "Master Farmer" from the Department of Agriculture.

But each year that he ploughed, he produced unsatisfactory yields because he was unable to devote enough time to his masimo. Believing that "weekend farming" techniques were unlikely ever to be productive, Masire decided to go full-time. In this vocation he worked closely with his two brothers, Basimane and Basimanyane.

So, in 1955 he bought a brand new tractor and asked for a greatly increased land allocation for his ploughing needs. Only one other Mongwaketse at this time, one Setlhatswapelo Moses, owned a tractor. As a result, other Bangwaketse, notably Kgosi Bathoen, were envious of Masire. "This did not endear me to his heart," recalls the President, "and Bathoen quickly bought a second-hand machine from Pakrin of Rankoromane."

As a full-time agriculturalist Masire astounded his neighbours with his massive grain yields. Some of them became jealous and began muttering about him "taking too much land". A few organized small-scale conspiracies behind his back. They would eventually use tensions between Masire and Bathoen to get back at him.

A number of people took notice of Masire due to his strange methods. They were amused by his going around the village asking for people's kraal manure, which he spread on his fields. At one point he became a laughing stock when he began "thinning" his fields, uprooting grown plants in order to give the remaining crop more light and soil nutrients. So ridiculous was thinning thought to be that some Bangwaketse brought the matter up in kgotla. But later on, after the harvest was in, Masire showed up in kgotla with a gift of a large, thick bundle of sweet reed for the Chief. The critics were silenced for good.

Masire's ideas, though, had earned Bathoen's condemnation in the early 1950s. During a kgotla meeting he had proposed the then dramatic step of introducing drift fences into the Bangwaketse Reserve in order to separate farms from cattle posts. Such a step, he contended, would have the favourable effect of releasing more children from agricultural labour and allow them to go to school. According to Masire:

"It was my contention that the main problem was that boys herded the cattle primarily to ensure that they did not get into the corn fields and the girls were equally keeping a watch out at the lands to stop cattle from getting into the fields in the event their brothers lost them. I therefore suggested that what have come to be called "drift fences" be used to separate cattle areas from lands areas. As soon as I sat down the Chief shot up (which was unusual) to pooh-pooh what I said and referred to me as "Raterata" [literally, "Father of fences"]. I was from that day nicknamed Raterata, a name I have come to be very fond of, as I am wedded to fencing as a management tool of both land and livestock."

Through such arguments as these, which were not adopted, Masire was identified as a young "radical" in the kgotla. Conservative elders were afraid of men of his type, especially Kgosi Bathoen, who was accustomed to hearing "Ehh Morena" whenever he spoke in public. Masire was one of the few to challenge him in argument. As a result, many people have come to believe that Masire and Bathoen were implacable opponents, and a number of false tales circulate about their alleged confrontations. In reality the Kgosi privately asked Masire for advice on many issues. The two had a definite "love-hate relationship". According to Masire, Bathoen respected his young counterpart's energy and intelligence, but felt many of his ideas "too revolutionary and dangerous" for Tswana society at that time.

Notwithstanding their differences, in 1956 Bathoen approved Masire's kgotla election to a reformed Tribal Council and Executive Committee. Subsequently he appointed Masire, along with Mr. Ntau Mogobe, to newly-created posts of Subordinate African Authorities. The two had the power to represent the Kgosi in all matters relating to agriculture, including: [1] the allotment and utilization of arable land; [2] the introduction of new agricultural methods; [3] conservation of soil; [4] control of forestry.

The District Commissioner felt that Masire would be able to correct various abuses if he was allowed to exercise his authority. Some large landowners, he felt, did nothing with their masimo. "As a result, there is common talk among the people that arable land is no longer available. If one of the allottees though successful reached a stage of dislike and jealousy, he ran the risk of being ejected." But the DC had faith in Masire, whom he felt was "an enthusiastic farmer with modern ideas. As an intelligent young man, it is hoped that he will influence the people to adopt new agricultural methods."

But, ever jealous of his own authority, Bathoen seems to have quickly developed second thoughts about delegating much authority to his dynamic "agricultural minister". In August 1956 the Kgosi created a new Bangwaketse Grain Control Board with himself as Chairman. Empowered to approve all grain exports from the district, membership in this body was initially limited to resident white and Indian traders. Masire and other progressive farmers felt that the Grain Control Board ought to include the input of local producers as well as buyers. But he was shut off the board, which ignored him when he showed up at meetings. In this way his "ministerial" position was compromised by his lack of involvement on the Control Board.

Shortly thereafter Bathoen fired Masire following the most severe altercation the two ever had. Their dispute arose over a cooperative that Bathoen had organized to sell Bangwaketse cattle to the Lobatse abattoir. There was a great deal of resentment to the cooperative by Kanye's cattle owners as the arrangement involved a monopoly between the Bangwaketse Tribal Administration and the BMC.

Sometime during the 1956-7 planting season Masire decided to sell off cattle to raise money for a new tractor. He took some beasts into Kanye to fill up the cooperative's quota, but by the time he got there the quota was full. Bathoen told Masire to bring his cattle back next week as part of the next quota, but the latter had no desire to walk his animals back to his moraka some 40km away. Instead Ketumile sold his cattle to a local European speculator and headed home with his cash.

Bathoen was enraged by this act which defied his monopoly. Nor could he afford to have his senior agricultural official avoiding the cattle cooperative. When Masire returned to Kanye

some days later, the two had "an open encounter at kgotla" and Masire was fired. Shortly thereafter Bathoen took away a large proportion of Masire's land on the pretext that neighbours were complaining about "encroachment".

By this time the harvest had not yet been made and Masire could at least derive some satisfaction from his fields' final output. Although the year had not been very wet, he produced a bumper harvest of 1,000 bags of sorghum alone. This followed his 1955-6 crop that had made him the largest exporter in Gangwaketse. It was fitting that in 1956 Masire completed his course at Hildavale and the Department of Agriculture awarded him the Master Farmer's Certificate--the first awarded to an African in Botswana. As such a farmer, Masire won many prizes at agricultural shows. His sorghum crop, which was thick and healthy-looking, became known as "Kanye Standard" and was never matched.

Working with his brothers, Masire was also quick to take full advantage of the opportunities created by the 1954 reopening of the Lobatse abattoir. He expanded his commercial livestock production at the time when many Bangwaketse only sold their beasts to meet immediate expenses. Masire worked to establish a high offtake rate from his herds. In Kanye he became the talk of the town when he began to sell up to thirty head of cattle at a time while his herds grew through better breeding. He also introduced karakul sheep to the Ngwaketse reserve and is said to have become the biggest owner of donkeys in his district.

Sir Ketumile remains an active agriculturalist to this day. He continued to be a full-time farmer until 1966 despite having many other political and journalistic responsibilities. Even today he is starting new ventures in game and ostrich farming.

Recollecting about his farming days, the President remembers that his new agricultural techniques, though successful for him, had difficulty penetrating the traditional system. One neighbour came to visit him one day to ask about the use of fertilizer, and he was given a bag to use during the upcoming season. Over the following months Masire saw the man's crop grow high and healthy. Eventually they met somewhere, and the man thanked Masire profusely for the fertilizer. "I put a handful in each corner of my fields and it worked wonderfully," he said.

6. A WEDDING WITH INCONVENIENCE

During his years as a teacher and commercial farmer Masire was falling in love. In 1951 he had sent his younger sister, Gabalengwe, to his old school Tiger Kloof to further her education. Gabalengwe befriended an 18-year-old Morolong from Mafikeng named Gladys Olebile Molefi, who was training to be a primary school teacher. Although Gabalengwe was forced to drop out of Tiger Kloof in 1952 due to ill-health, she remained in contact with her school friend.

In 1953 the future Lady Olebile took up a teaching career in South Africa. During one of her Christmas holidays, she visited Kanye to see Gabalengwe and stayed for about a month. It was then the young Gladys met the man who would become her husband. After a period of courtship, the two were engaged and set a wedding date for December 1957.

A few weeks before the wedding, Kanye's Master Farmer went to Mafikeng to restock his supply of fertilizer for the coming planting season. He also took the opportunity to purchase a supply of "Agracin", a mercuric chloride-based fungicide. Mercuric chloride was commonly used as an anti-septic agent in the 1950s before the serious health risks associated with its use were known. On his journey Masire placed his bag of Agracin close to his clothing bag, and as a result a small but potentially lethal amount leaked into his pyjamas. Before long Masire absorbed some of the dangerous compound through his skin while sleeping.

Ketumile had gone to the lands after arriving home, and there he felt increasingly lethargic. By this time the mercuric chloride must have passed into his kidneys and before long he showed signs of arenal failure. His now-worried brother, Basimane, insisted on taking him to Kanye's Seventh Day Adventist Hospital for medical attention. An initially reluctant Ketumile joked about his younger brother acting like a father. But Basimane hitched a trailer with some bedding to a tractor and pulled his sick brother into town.

At first, Doctors Hay and Birkenstock at the "Sabata" Hospital were unable to make a diagnosis and were willing to release Masire. But their ailing subject insisted on staying for observation. After some time Masire drew the doctors' attention to the "metallic" taste and odour in his mouth, and also showed them a packet of Agracin which he increasingly suspected of causing his troubles. Once Dr. Hay saw that mercuric chloride was the main ingredient, it became clear to him that the young fiancée was suffering from a serious case of poisoning.

Hay had only once before, during the Second World War, come face to face with a case of mercuric-chloride poisoning. Unsure of how to proceed, he spent the entire night among his books seeking to find a cure for Masire's affliction. Eventually he found an antidote, BAL (British anti-lewsite, or Dimercaprol), but discovered to his horror that the cure was supposed to be ingested within 36 hours of the patient's initial exposure. Otherwise, the standard text states: "Death is the usual outcome unless treatment is started immediately."

Hay decided to obtain the antidote anyway. But the task was not easy as the nearest chemist with the drug was in Mafikeng, about a hundred kilometres away by dirt road. Bias Mookodi cycled over to Bathoen's house, and Bathoen sent Mookodi and his young son Seepapitso to Mafikeng in a Ford truck. A relative, D.M. Mokaila, followed in his own car. On arrival in Mafikeng, the group was frustrated to find Mr. T.A. Little's pharmacy (where Mokaila's

father worked) closed as it was a public holiday in the Union. With the help of Mokaila Sr. the determined group eventually tracked down the pharmacist at a braai in the countryside and were able to get the medicine.

Whether the BAL injections helped Masire is hard to tell. For some time, he continued to be very sick, and at one point was given a mere five percent chance of recovery. In addition, the doctors felt, Masire would not completely recover for many years if he managed to survive.

Meanwhile Masire's bride-to-be had continued to make wedding arrangements in Mafikeng, unaware of what was going on in Kanye. Miss Molefi thus arrived in Kanye with her wedding party only to be shocked by talk that her groom might not have long to live. Despite the gloomy prognosis offered by the doctors, the future First Lady was determined to go ahead with the wedding.

The next day the two were married, and family members filled the SDA hospital ward for the ceremony. The bridegroom was very weak but managed to leave his bed for a while. Bias Mookodi acted as best man during the ceremony, after which Masire managed to stroll around and talk with guests. Thus was the Masire's marriage, with some inconvenience, formalized.

In the weeks following the wedding Masire made a miraculous recovery, quickly regaining all his former strength and energy to the surprise of his doctors. He amused them by teaching them Setswana phrases when they came around to check up on him. After his release he continued to be Kanye's leading farmer and also entered journalism.

The Masires have been blessed with three sons and three daughters. Their first child, a daughter, Gaone, was born in late 1958. Mmasekgoa followed in 1960 and their first son, Mpho, in 1961. Their other sons, Mmetla and Moabi, came in 1963 and 1968 respectively. MmaGaone and RaGaone's last-born daughter, Matshidiso, arrived in 1969.

As a result of the circumstances surrounding their wedding Sir Ketumile and Lady Olebile were never able to have a honeymoon. "I want one when I retire," the President notes today.

7. JOURNALIST

It was not long after Kgosi Bathoen scaled back the young Ketumile Masire's lands in 1957 that the latter turned to journalism as an avenue for his attentions.

In the early 1950s, various young intellectuals sought to take part in the politics of the Bechuanaland Protectorate. They were stymied, however, by the fact that the government only consulted the chiefs on political issues.

"We, the young people," according to Masire, "wished to see Batswana acting as a country at the end of the colonial era, not as tribes. This is what caused two colleagues and I to want to start a paper. It was not money, or politics. We were reading African Advisory Council[5] *minutes and seeing that the Chiefs wanted to be big fish in small ponds."*

[5]The forum in which the government consulted the Chiefs.

So, in 1955 Masire, together with G.A.T. Gare of Moshupa and M.L.A. Kgasa of Kanye, tried to form what would have been Botswana's first indigenous newspaper. The trio were forced to give up this dream as they lacked the capital necessary to cover printing costs. But in trying to set the paper up, Masire had contacted a number of people in the region involved in the publishing industry. Two of these contacts eventually got back in touch with him.

"In 1958 I was visited by a certain Mr. Dumbrell and a Mr. Harrison, representing the Argus group. They asked me if I could represent them in Bechuanaland and Northern Cape if they were to produce a paper covering the three High Commission territories. As this would in effect achieve, at least in part, what my colleagues and I had attempted to do three years earlier, I readily agreed."

By 1958 Henry Dumbrell and D.S. Harrison, the General Manager of the Argus Group's "Bantu Press", had been given the go-ahead to re-establish Naledi Ya Batswana. Dumbrell had been the Protectorate's first Director of Education from 1935-45, and hoped to bring back Naledi, which had gone bankrupt in 1955. Dumbrell himself had been one of several British administrators to create Indlovu/Tlou, the forerunner to Naledi, which, as mentioned earlier, was a source of home front news for Batswana soldiers serving in the Second World War. With its network of Setswana correspondents covering every district of the Protectorate, Indlovu/Tlou had proved popular with local readers as well as troops. As a result, the Protectorate administration agreed to subsidize the Argus group in launching the original Naledi Ya Batswana. It then survived for just over a decade as a Setswana weekly with a readership in both the Union and the Protectorate.

Included in the new Naledi was what became a weekly High Commission Territories supplement called African Echo, which was also distributed through newspapers in Lesotho and Swaziland. Masire's job was to organize correspondents and material for the Protectorate section of African Echo. Both Naledi and the insert benefited from colonial government subsidies to the Argus group. Neither Masire nor Naledi's chief editor, Kgosi Lebotse of Mochudi, however, were aware of these subsidies until much later.

Masire's first challenge at the paper was to reconstruct a territory-wide network of correspondents, and he obtained freelance reporters in many of the smaller as well as the capital villages. His press team would undoubtedly be the envy of today's independent press. Some, like "Push and Pull" (Amos Dambe), "Observer" (L.D. Raditladi), "Loyalist" (Monametsi Chiepe), "P.M. Shaba" (Peter Sebina), and "Tribesman" (Moutlakgola Nwako), had written for the earlier Naledi. Most of these correspondents used nom-de-plumes since many of them were civil servants and feared reprisals for their advocacy journalism. Other correspondents feared upsetting their chiefs. Most of them were anxious to receive seven to fifteen shillings each article earned in order to supplement their salaries.

Naledi itself was a bilingual Setswana/English newspaper, with stories divided evenly between the two. The Echo section inside Naledi was different in that it contained only local news. It carried a page or two on local political news, council activities, chiefly politics and the like. There was also a sports page, covering mainly local soccer and tennis. It also ran columns and features, and photos of young South African "nurses" were included on a regular basis.

There is nothing in Naledi itself to let the reader know that Masire was the Botswana editor for the paper. His name only appears several times in its pages--in connection with post-

1961 political events. But as he travelled regularly on newspaper business and met many prominent people his editorship became well known around the Protectorate.

During his years with Naledi, Masire was given a free rein to collect stories in the Bechuanaland Protectorate and the Northern Cape. In addition to this travelling, he also attended a monthly meeting in Johannesburg.

The pay was not particularly good (Masire likens it to a "retainer's fee") but travel expenses were covered. He continued to support himself and his family partly through farming. Despite the low pay, Masire was rewarded with the chance to meet many people and make contacts.

"The first time I saw Seretse Khama, he was with [Bangwato Regent] Rasebolai and I took his picture," remembers Masire. "He objected, and I said, 'I am too small to be asking you questions.' They accepted that."

One noteworthy story undoubtedly penned by Masire appeared in May 1961, under the headline "Miss Chiepe in SA delegation". It describes the young Gaositswe Chiepe going to the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts at Makerere in Uganda. In later life, of course, they would serve on the nation's Cabinet together.

The fact that it was subsidized by the colonial government did not prevent Naledi from taking a critical line in either its content or editorials. In late January 1963 the Mafikeng authorities felt compelled to call in Masire and Lebotse "for discussions relating to certain articles which had appeared in Naledi to which the government had taken some exception." These complaints included alleged inaccuracies, favourable coverage "of a particular political party", and "ignoring authoritative information already supplied by Government." Notwithstanding this dressing down the paper continued to maintain its autonomy before its final demise in 1964.

Masire stuck with Naledi until early in 1963, by which time he had entered politics and was becoming increasingly busy as a party organizer.

While Naledi was not a mass circulation paper inside Botswana it enjoyed a loyal readership among the educated elite, a group becoming increasingly interested in national politics as the era of colonialism came to an end. Masire himself became a better-known figure among progressive activists beyond Gangwaketse. While working for the paper he gained invaluable experience in building an organization from the bottom up and coordinating it over a large area. Journalism also fuelled his personal interest in the new nationalist politics which he was covering as a reporter.

Journalism was Masire's stepping stone to politics.

8. BECOMING A POLITICIAN

In the early 1960s Ketumile Masire rose to a position of national leadership in a very short span of time. Only five years after he became a party politician he was elected as the nation's first Vice-President. In the process he was largely responsible for developing the machinery of a party that has won every election it has ever contested.

Masire's rise to political prominence took a lot of people by surprise, and many who knew him in his early life express shock at his rapid ascent. This is not due to any perceived lack of ability, but rather the fact that as a young man he was engaged in purely mundane affairs and showed no great desire to be a politician.

Not that the young Masire had ever lacked political consciousness. Some Bangwaketse recall that when still a secondary school student he brought a radio back to Kanye for the holidays. This was one of the first wirelesses in Gangwaketse. In the critical days of 1948 when the National Party was on the brink of an electoral victory in the Union, Masire listened to his radio intensely. Fellow Kanye residents joined him next to the radio, but few shared his interest in or knowledge of events across the border. After 1948 he continued to listen, dissatisfied at the subsequent introduction of grand apartheid.

In politics, as in farming, Masire took an atypical approach. Fittingly, he had in 1947 been inducted into "Maganamokgwa"[6] regiment with his Bangwaketse age-mates. How this name came to be chosen is unknown, but in many ways, it was a suitable name for Masire. We have seen how in the 1950s he came into conflict with the status quo on various occasions, and gained the reputation as being a young "radical". On one such occasion he had startled the crowd at a large pitso by predicting that "One day democracy will replace autocracy in Kanye."

Masire's initial involvement in politics was an outgrowth of his commitment to community service. In the 1950s he had served as officer for some small groups, in addition to being "Minister of Agriculture" and also a tribal councillor for short periods. But his activities at this time in public affairs were minimal. During the 1956-60 period, for instance, the Bangwaketse school board was moribund as Bathoen controlled educational policy on his own. Real involvement in politics began for him in 1961, when he stood for election for the new local councils and the reformed Tribal Council, and was elected to both representing Godimo ward. For the first time these bodies contained elected majorities, whereas in the past Kgosi Bathoen had appointed members. When the Tribal Council met for the second time in April 1961, Masire was unanimously elected to the African Council--a new body which replaced the old African Advisory Council.

The old Council had only included Chiefs and their advisors, and so the African Council was the first body to bring together elected Batswana to a national forum. In 1961 the Council's main duty was to elect members to the new multi-racial Legislative Council (Legco), which was contemplating issues related to Botswana's eventual independence.

Masire arrived at the meeting to find that the election was to be held as the one of the first items of business. He then wrote a message to the Resident Commissioner, Peter Fawcus, requesting that the election be postponed a few days "as we would be meeting as complete strangers and therefore not in a position to say who among us would be best suited."

The election timetable was pushed back a few days and balloting was held on April 19th. Five delegates were chosen from the northern and southern sections of the Protectorate. Representing the north were Seretse Khama, Tsheko Tsheko, L.D. Raditladi, Archelaus Tsoebebe, and Goareng Mosinyi, while the southerners included the Chiefs Bathoen II,

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[6]"Those who reject tradition".

Mokgosi III and Letlole Mosielele as well as Dr. S. Molema and Masire. Of the southern delegates Masire was the only one who was not identified as being part of the "old guard" who had dominated the African Advisory Council.

Despite the importance placed upon Legco by planners, it never had much impact. By the time it met for its first meeting in June 1961 it was already becoming an anachronism. Its members, ten white, ten African, and one Indian, had been elected by segregated and unequal ballots. Three political parties had arisen to protest its racial composition, which were Raditladi's Federal Party, the short-lived Bechuanaland Congress Party of Ken Koma, and also the Botswana People's Party (BPP) led by K.T. Motsete, Motsamai Mpho, and Phillip Matante.

But the Legco meetings had one important, if unintended, aspect. It was there that some of its African members got together to organize the party that would come to dominate the nation's politics--the Botswana Democratic Party (BDP). But before continuing with this story some background information needs to be given.

In 1961 it was the BPP that was attracting the most attention in the Protectorate with its strident anti-colonial rhetoric and opposition to racist practices. It created a good deal of interest and support especially in the impoverished townships of Lobatse and Francistown, and also on other settlements along the railway. But the BPP ultimately failed to recruit many of the leading progressives in the larger rural centres. Thus, in early 1961 there were a significant group of younger men interested in politics who had as yet found no home. Such people were often found on the newly-elected Tribal Councils.

It was in the latter part of 1961 that these rural-based progressives began to organize in Gammangwato. In October a four-day kgotla debate was held to decide whether the BPP should be banned with the Ngwato Reserve. Conservative elements in the area were opposed to the activities of all political parties, which threatened to undermine the Chieftainship. But the younger men were more in favour of freedom of association and assembly, and most were also in favour of curbing the powers of Chiefs and moving toward democratic government. Seretse Khama was the natural leader of this group. His kgotla speech is recorded in the minutes thus:

"Mr. Seretse Khama agreed that the People's Party was confusing the people and was out to cause dissension between the tribe, Government and white inhabitants of the Territory. He said that the only way to fight the Party was for those who stood for the chieftainship and for peaceful co-existence with the white people was to form themselves into a body which would expose the falsehoods put out by the People's Party and which would be instrumental in persuading Government to bring about changes in the administration of the Territory that might be desirable. At present the tribe had no organization to fight the Party and were doing nothing to stop them. The people should unite and form an organisation with proper leaders which would be a power in the land and which would be able not only to stop the damage being caused by the People's Party but which would be able to advise Government what should be done to further the interests of the Territory."

Following the speech, a group on the Ngwato Tribal Executive Committee, including Mosinyi, Raditladi, Moutlakgola Nwako, G.G. Sebeso, and Seretse himself became the core of the envisaged party. One month later at the second Legco meeting in Lobatse Seretse called a caucus of all the African members of the Council. There he put forward his idea for

a "Bechuanaland National Democratic Party." By this time Seretse had been advised to recruit Masire into his party if he wanted to have a truly national party.

Masire immediately agreed to join, as he had found no outlet in the other parties. His colleague, Waco, with whom he had corresponded regularly about politics, was another envisaged member. Moreover, the new party had the prestige of being backed by Seretse Khama, whose cause Masire had sympathized with in the 1950s.

"Between Seretse and I it was love at first sight.[7] *We clicked the first day we met [at Legco]. He must have heard about me from someone."*

By late 1961 Masire's own interest in the potential of party politics had been increased by his attendance of early BPP "freedom squares" as a reporter for Naledi. On these occasions he heard Matante and his old Tiger Kloof colleague Mpho give fiery speeches. He appreciated their call for fundamental change but was "horrified" by some of what was said. Mpho, he recalls, adhered to a pro-ANC line, while Matante's speeches promoted PAC ideology. This disturbed Masire because he felt that due to their fixation on South African politics "they had nothing about Botswana" in their programme. So, when BPP President Motsete approached him in 1961 about membership, Masire had been "non-committal". By this time Masire had already been approached by Raditladi about joining the Federal Party. Masire, though, had objected to the "Federal" aspect of Raditladi's ideas, wanting instead a united country.

So Masire was enlisted into the fledgling party. He, Seretse, and Archelaus Tsoebebe, were charged with drafting a constitution to be presented to a larger meeting at Mahalapye in January 1962. At that meeting the constitution was passed along with some amendments, and Amos Dambe convinced everyone to drop the "National" from the party name. One month later the party held its inaugural public meeting at Gaborone under a morula tree not far from the modern-day Orapa House. This venue had been chosen after their proposed meeting in Mochudi had been vetoed by the Bakgatla regent and his conservative supporters. At the first meeting the BDP elected its officers with the top three positions going to Seretse Khama, President; Tsoebebe, Vice-President; and Masire, Secretary.

9. THE PATH TO POWER

In 1965 the then Bechuanaland Democratic Party (BDP) won a landslide victory in Botswana's first nationwide, one person one vote, election. The BDP captured 28 out of 31 contested seats and garnered just over 80% of the vote.

Despite this overwhelming success the party's triumph looked far from certain at the time of its birth in early 1962. Outside of the Ngwato Reserve, where Seretse Khama's standing assured a solid base of initial support, it was largely through Ketumile Masire's tireless grassroots organizing that the BDP was transformed from an elite network into a national movement.

In the early months of 1962 BDP Secretary Masire was confronted with the fact that the rival Bechuanaland People's Party (BPP) had a considerable head start in both recruiting and fundraising. The BPP already had the support of thousands in towns like Francistown and

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7 [7]Really, it was love at "second sight". See page 25.

Lobatse who had been mobilized by the anti-colonialist rhetoric of the party's pioneering Freedom Squares. So, when the BDP began organizing it had much smaller crowds than the BPP. At one such early meeting in Francistown, BPP leader Phillip Matante taunted the BDP saying:

"Ke bale Madomkraga, ba re ba dire phutego, mme ba naene o ka re ba ja legapu!"[8]

Having committed himself to the BDP, Masire, in his own words, "never looked back." He set about recruiting activists in all of the country's regions and villages, unlike the BPP which concentrated almost all of its efforts along the line of rail in the east. Masire started off by sitting down "to write letters to anyone I could think of," and often such people were those he had known as editor of Naledi Ya Batswana. Others were teachers, progressive farmers, and old Tiger Kloof acquaintances. He also made a number of personal approaches. For instance, one then prospective member, who was visited in Lobatse in 1962 by Masire and Nwako, recalls the BDP recruiting organizers with a 2-point plan. The BDP would unite the country under Seretse and end the old tribal divisions. Second, it would curb the powers of the Chiefs regarding such issues as land allocation.

Nuts and bolts organizing of this sort paid off for Masire as he soon recruited an ever-widening network of younger educated men. These activists were generally not supporters of the BPP but saw the need for party politics to replace Chieftainship as the basis for future politics. One crucial Masire recruit was Englishman Kgabo of the Bakwena Tribal Council, whose move to the BDP was soon followed by forty-two of sixty-three members on that body. Masire made Kgabo the BDP's Southern Regional Organizer, a move that ended up being successful. The BDP completely outmanoeuvred the BPP in the Kweneng district and has yet to lose a seat there.

When the BPP split in July 1962 over ideological differences the BDP picked up much momentum. Matante's PAC-oriented faction of the BPP ended up purging Mpho's pro-ANC wing of the party and the two were never reunited. As the two factions bickered over the coming year, they were unable to counter the slowly-expanding BDP base. Moreover, members started deserting to the BDP which seemed to them to be concerned more with national issues than with "foreign ideology". Masire rubbed the point home by ridiculing Matante, who was going around dressed up in Ghanaian robes.

Masire and his colleagues never allowed their rivals' internal troubles to breed complacency within their own ranks. As the BPP leaders turned on themselves, Masire was encouraging his own unpaid activists to crisscross the countryside addressing rallies. Most of them relied on bicycles to get to their destinations, as the BDP did not have the funds to purchase trucks until two months before the 1965 election when it bought two Chevrolets.

Masire's standard stump speech, which he gave dozens of times during the period, stressed one thing: "the need to organize for the days of independence." The BDP, under the leadership of Seretse, he promised, "would democratize society and let people take control of their own affairs and not rely on the chief." Thus, during the period of transition to independence, "a national government would be set up, and would take over powers held by

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[8]Look at the BDP meeting of nine people, they are like a group gathered to eat a melon!

chiefs." The BDP, he attested, was the right party to run such a government. Also included, needless to say, was a certain amount of abuse directed towards opposing parties.

The BDP organizers were led by Masire's example. During one two-week period in 1963 he travelled over 5,000 kilometres across some of the remotest corners of the Ghanzi, Kgalagadi, and western Kweneng districts to address 24 inaugural meetings. In the process he recruited such future parliamentarians as Eyes Reokwaeng, Boy Moapare, and N.S. Sekga into the BDP fold. All three were elected in 1965 unopposed. It was also on this trip that Masire contacted David Keatlaretse of Maun, who went on to organize the BDP election campaign in Ngamiland where the party won all three seats. So, by the end of 1963 Masire's organization covered all of the country.

Certainly, the BDP's agenda did not meet much opposition. In 1962 the response was cool, but it gradually warmed up. Due to the BDP's anti-chief stance, it eventually ran into opposition from Bathoen, the only strong chief at that time. Bathoen did not harass the BDP much, however, according to Masire, even though "Bathoen felt betrayed when Seretse became openly democratic. Not that he had ever been promised anything, but he had come to the wrong conclusions." To avert possible trouble, Masire was careful never to ask Bathoen for permission to hold political rallies, but instead merely informed him about them in advance.

But in his days of organizing, Masire never faced any significant obstacles, nor was he ever abused on the platform. His message was popular, and in any case, he often talked in places where the opposition had never mobilized.

Non-stop political organizing and travelling took its toll on Masire. His doctor had advised him to take some months off, but he instead "stubbornly stuck to his guns." In 1964 he collapsed in the BDP office. "I rang home and asked my wife to bring my pyjamas, so I could go to hospital. Eventually I ended up in Baragwanath."[9]

During this early time of organizing the party took on many of the characteristics that mark it today. In the first place, most of its organizers and leaders were men with at least a Secondary School education and who could speak fluent English. Masire was conscious of the need to have people who were well qualified to serve in government. The party also adopted the nickname of "Domkrag" after a meeting at which an old man began chanting it amid the usual shouts of "Tsholetsa". Many Batswana had problems saying "Democratic" and so "Domkrag" caught on quickly. It became the semi-official BDP name after Matante ridiculed the term by emphasizing the "Dom"[10] syllable. That only made BDP members more stubborn about adopting the moniker. Moreover, the party adopted its white, red and black banner apparently due to one of its founders' schoolboy appreciation of Bismarck's unification of Germany under the Kaiser.

In 1963 the move toward independence began in earnest when Resident Commissioner Peter Fawcus began multilateral consultations with representatives of all the political parties, the Chiefs, and the white settler community. Fawcus planned to introduce internal self-government, not through the Legislative Council, but through a new democratic constitution.

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[9]In Johannesburg.

[10]"Stupid" in Afrikaans.

During the talks Fawcus agreed to a fully-elected, non-racial legislature, surprising many delegates. For the BDP negotiators, Masire, Nwako, and Seretse, the result was a triumph. They had kept their public statements moderate leading up to the conference as they felt that the colonial regime would willingly support substantial reforms if they did not present an antagonistic position.

The "Fawcus Plan" effectively placed Botswana's future in the hands of whichever nationalist politicians managed to win an upcoming election. In order to consolidate its position before the election, the party introduced a newspaper, Therisanyo, published on a monthly basis between 1964 and 1967. Therisanyo, the country's first non-government periodical, was a one-man show run by its editor, Masire. Today he maintains that the paper aided the BDP in popularizing its basic programme among the literate and its electoral symbol among the illiterate.

It was during the run-up to the elections that Masire and his BDP colleagues first made their appearance on the international scene. In 1964 Seretse Khama detailed Masire to go to Zambia to seek financial support for party activities. After arriving at the Lusaka airport, Masire was driven to President Kenneth Kaunda's house, where he found the latter drinking coffee with the leaders of the Zimbabwe liberation movements. Once the Zimbabweans left, Masire and Kaunda got down to business, and worked late into the night. According to Masire, Kaunda "treated me like a long-lost brother." The two went on to be long-time friends, and Masire still admires Kaunda as much as any other statesman that he has met:

"You would have to say about Kaunda that he had a great deal of modesty and sincerity, and for that reason he was an exceptional person. We had fundamental differences in opinion, but I still respected him. It is really a pity that Kaunda did not have a successful economic policy."

On Election Day in 1965 the BDP alone fielded candidates in all the constituencies. As noted earlier, most of these candidates were educated and well-known locally. Moreover, most of the opposing BPP and Botswana Independence Party (led by Mpho) candidates became active only just prior to the election during the nomination period and hence had no chance of doing well as they were often unknowns. Under these circumstances the BDP's superior organization paid it handsome results. Of the 140,000-odd voters, some four-fifths cast their ballots for Domkrag.

In Kanye South constituency Masire himself faced two opponents, including BPP Secretary-General Peter Maruping. The result was no contest, with Masire winning a 96% landslide in his home district. In 1965 he entered the new parliament as an MP and was appointed Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance. At the time he was the youngest member of Seretse Khama's cabinet. With the advent of independence, a year later he became Botswana's first Vice-President.

10. YEARS AS VICE-PRESIDENT 1966-80

Sir Ketumile Masire's years as Vice-President saw him gain an international reputation as an astute statesman who was credited with playing a leading role in Botswana's economic progress. His long reign as Minister of Finance and Development Planning was marked by a conservative "technocratic" approach which gave Botswana a healthy measure of fiscal stability, as well as infrastructural development, during the first two decades after

independence. Masire's solid performance as Seretse Khama's right hand man that assured his own rise to the Presidency in 1980.

While Masire's record as Vice-President is certainly exemplary, his tenure was not an unbroken string of successes. In 1969 he suffered a sharp political setback when he lost his parliamentary seat to Bathoen II. Nor was Masire's passionate desire to promote rural development ever fully realized, as various government projects failed to significantly raise rural production in areas other than in the heavily subsidized livestock industry. Thus Masire, whose career as a successful commercial farmer had instilled a strong belief in the potential of technology to revolutionize arable agriculture, is more likely to go down in history as the minister who laid the foundation for urban industrial development.

ECONOMIC PLANNING

"The real obstacles to progress are found in ourselves--our attitudes to change and initiative, our ignorance of what needs to be done and what each must do, our customary practices for example in respect of land tenure and other matters which inhibit progress . . . We cannot develop rapidly unless we are willing to change our society. Development can only take place in a social environment which welcomes and controls change." - Dr. Quett Masire, April 1970.

Botswana's economy has had the world's fastest growth rate since 1966. From a nation that was among the poorest ten in the world at independence, the country is now one of the richest in Africa. Significantly this growth has been accompanied by substantial public investment in *both* rural and urban infrastructure, most especially in the areas of communication, education, and health care. During the first fourteen years after independence the politician in charge of development planning was Ketumile Masire. The strategies used by his ministry are still in place today and continue to be the cornerstone of Botswana's evolution.

Economic planning is crucial to the well-being of all citizens within a country. The choices made by the few have a great impact upon the fortunes of the many. It was due to the importance of the task that Seretse Khama retained Masire as Minister of Finance when he appointed him as Vice-President in 1966. The following year he took up the new portfolio of Development Planning, which in 1970 evolved under his leadership into the super Ministry of Finance and Development Planning (MFDP).

At independence Botswana was desperately poor. It had practically no industry or infrastructure. All of its foreign exchange was earned by two meagre sources--the export of beef and remittances from Batswana working in South Africa. So limited were its revenue sources that the British government felt it would have to support Botswana financially for a generation. Most of the population lived by peasant farming and had little education or support with which to improve their livelihoods. Making the situation even worse was the fact that in 1966 the country had suffered severe crop failures and was facing mass starvation. A third of the nation's livestock perished. Thus, in his first year in office Masire spent much time travelling abroad in order to obtain desperately needed food to enable Batswana to survive until the rains returned. While accepting one contribution from the Freedom from Hunger Campaign he noted that what his people ultimately needed was not food handouts but agricultural development.

In the early years of independence Masire's job was not easy. In the first place he had had no formal training whatsoever in economics or finance. Moreover, he was working in a brand new ministry without any established procedures or personnel. Nor was the job easy given the dearth of funding that was then available to build industry and create jobs and export earnings for Botswana.

In 1966 economic policy was as yet undefined, and a split erupted quickly in the government over the direction the government should take. This split was serious in nature, and almost destroyed the government's cohesion. It was only resolved after two years of arguments.

Inside the new Ministry of Finance stood two factions. On the one hand stood a number of conservative bureaucrats inherited from the old colonial government. Led by Permanent Secretary Alf Beeby, this group was mainly interested in ensuring that government expenditure equalled its revenues. For this group, "balancing the budget" was of supreme importance, and it refused to entertain any ideas about economic development until monies were in hand.

Opposed to the bureaucrats were several forward-looking economists, who as a group looked to Masire for political backing. They believed in aggressive planning for economic growth, identification of potential projects, and then finally lobbying internationally for potential sources of aid or loans to finance the projects. Moreover, they even promoted the idea of borrowing money to finance development. This group, which included such notable figures as P. Landell-Mills and Q. Hermans, helped Masire draft a "Transitional Development Plan", which incorporated active measures to promote economic growth and the wealth of its citizens. .

Beeby apparently saw the young development planners gathering around Masire as a threat to his own status. A few weeks after independence he tried to have Landell-Mills transferred out of the civil service for insubordination. Landell-Mills' contacts with Masire were apparently cited as an example of the young economist's penchant for failing to work within proper bureaucratic channels. Initially Beeby had the support of President Seretse Khama. When Masire protested, Seretse explained his fear that the retention of Landell-Mills would lead to the resignation of not only Beeby but several others. Masire responded that if Landell-Mills went others might very well follow (implying that he himself might even resign over the issue).

Seretse did not back down from Masire's ultimatum immediately, and as a result the two communicated through intermediaries for several weeks. Eventually, though, the split was healed and a compromise reached. Masire, Landell-Mills, and their cohorts were given a separate ministry, the new Ministry of Development Planning, in 1967.

Once established, the new Ministry set about identifying suitable development projects through various development plans and sought foreign funding for them. Due to this preparation, the ministry never had problems finding funding for the projects it advocated. Various agencies such as the British Department of Overseas Development looked to Botswana as a place to spend its funds. "They could always find a range of projects here when they had underspending problems," remembers Masire. "Also, we could finish a project in a month." For this reason, Botswana often surpassed projected foreign aid receipts.

Following the establishment of his own ministry, Masire facilitated Botswana's admission to the World Bank in 1967 and was thereafter able to rely on funding from that body. In August 1971 he received $32 million from them to finance the Shashe Project, a figure which easily exceeded the previous year's total development expenditure. Masire also raised a great deal of new money when he helped renegotiate the South African Customs Union (SACU) agreement with South in 1969. In this crucial reorganization of SACU, the Botswana government delegation, led by Masire, took the South Africans head-on. It demonstrated the ill-effects of SACU on Botswana's economy, and demanded for a more equitable arrangement. This argument was successful, and Botswana received a drastically larger share of the Union's revenues subsequently. Moreover, the success of Botswana's chief economic negotiators increased their confidence and aided them in winning other good deals later on.

Due to increased foreign aid and SACU revenues, Botswana achieved, against all expert expectations, budgetary independence from British grants-in-aid in 1972. During this entire period most foreign aid and development expenditure was being earmarked for the creation of the copper/nickel mine at Selibi-Phikwe, which was seen as the greatest potential industrial and job-creating project in the country.

Due to limited revenues and development capital, Masire's ministry was initially forced to keep government spending down and resist extravagance of any kind. It did not borrow more money than it could repay, and delayed implementing badly-needed projects until funds became available. This miserly financial picture changed in 1970 with the expectation of new revenues from the Rapa Diamond Mine (opened in 1972). Masire's MFDP then decided to borrow far more money for development in the knowledge that it could be paid off later on. Extra money was earmarked for roads, schools, hospitals, parastatal Botswana Development Corporation investments, and civil service expansion. As a result, the economy expanded at an accelerated rate, and manufacturing and commercial activity took off in the urban areas. The plan worked, and by 1980 the diamond revenues enabled the government to pay off all of its debts. Having secured a stable internal revenue base, the MFDP resumed its former practice of not incurring debts in excess of earnings, a policy it has adhered to it to this day.

Although Masire was involved in trying to bring modern industry to Botswana, he remained very conscious of the need for rural development. Only with improved agricultural yields could Botswana hope to feed itself and keep the gap between the wealthy and poor low. Masire was very adamant on the latter point, in particular. In every country that has experienced rapid economic growth, a huge gap in wealth between rich and poor developed. But Masire felt that the Domkrag, which he called "the party of the common man," must take extra measures to prevent such an occurrence.

"We, the most fortunate ones, must never forget the rural areas. The Government would be fooling the people if it did not take steps to reduce the yawning gap between the standard of living of the few lucky enough to be given education and those who remain as peasants."

In an effort to keep rich and poor Batswana close in income, Masire's MFDP did several things. They kept government salaries and allowances down, and refused to allow all sorts of wasteful spending. The government also began to pay farmers to plough, and passed on to cattle owners the benefits of subsidized beef exports to the European Community. It also

encouraged agricultural modernization by providing training and advice to farmers, while granting loans to enable them to dig wells, buy tractors, and the like.

Masire believed very strongly that it was possible for farmers in Botswana to make money if they worked hard and used "modern" techniques. He and many others in government felt that cattle owners were particularly backward and needed to adopt Western patterns such as individual title to land, fencing and rotational grazing. If traditional methods of grazing cattle were continued, Masire maintained, "Botswana would be converted into an unproductive wasteland". For this reason, Masire became a leading advocate of the Tribal Grazing Land Policy (TGLP) in the 1970s.

TGLP, government agricultural planners felt, would introduce individual land ownership to rural Botswana as well as modern ranching methods. The government would allocate farms in remote areas to progressive cattle owners and give them loans to sink wells and build fences. It was hoped that the beneficiaries would eventually leave the communal lands, thus relieving congestion, while at the same time improving their production with new techniques. It was further felt that the rural poor as well as better off would be able to benefit from the program as they could combine to buy farms. Although the TGLP was not devised by Masire's ministry, he energetically supported the scheme in various public gatherings across the country. Believing that the educated youth were the ones who would ultimately lead the nation he made a special point of addressing student audiences in secondary schools about the plan's benefits.

When TGLP began in 1978, after several years of planning and consultation, it proved a disappointment. Most of the new ranches were unproductive, with some owners failing to even install fencing. Very few smaller cattle owners were willing or able to join together to buy a ranch. Over time it became obvious that few of the new ranch owners would ever repay their loans and that Western ranching techniques were not being adopted. Nor did the plan result in many ranch owners fully vacating their livestock from crowded communal pastures. The outbreak of a prolonged drought from 1980 further contributed to the failure.

What happened to TGLP is indicative of how the government found it difficult to boost agricultural production, despite its significant investment in well-intentioned programmes. While the country's economy expanded at the world's fastest rate, much of the wealth was concentrated in the fast-growing urban areas, including the new mining towns of Orapa, Jwaneng, and Selibi-Phikwe. As urban-based business and mining expanded many people began to leave the rural areas, thus contributing to agricultural decline.

Although the inability to increase rural production might be considered a "failure" of Masire's time in Development Planning, it should be noted that agriculture is a difficult way to make money even in countries with climates far superior to Botswana's. Nor has any modern nation become wealthy from farming. Botswana was at least able to provide more services to its rural population than was the case in other African states.

Masire is quick to acknowledge that Botswana has performed below expectations in agriculture:

"Agriculture is a major disappointment. As much as Botswana is a dry country, it has agricultural potential . . . The sceptics are wrong about Botswana's potential in agriculture.

They are putting new wine in old bottles, not looking to new solutions. But definitely the old crops do not pay," he notes.

"But just wait until I leave this post," he declares, "I will demonstrate that agriculture can pay.

"The problem is that success in some fields has drained talent away from agriculture into other channels. From a manpower point of view, it is the poorest of the poor."

"We have had many plans for agriculture. For instance, TGLP, which is often perceived as a scheme to benefit the rich. Really, it aimed to save our country from denudation. Only from private ownership can people be held responsible for overgrazing." He further explains that despite the government trying to advocate modern ranching methods, the scheme did not work.

"Our most talented people are not farmers. These individually-owned TGLP farms are a shame to us." He further laments the fact that small-scale cattle owners did not combine to take advantage of the scheme, noting "people are unwilling to help themselves."

"The potential we have in agriculture is not exploited. Look at Tunisia, they produce grapes in places with pure sand--God-forsaken areas. Places more arid than Botswana are producing. If we planned successfully this country could thrive agriculturally. We need inspired people to get into farming and skilled people to supervise farms."

Before 1980 Masire's MFDP was notably successful in avoiding the debt burdens most other African states incurred through over borrowing in the 1970s. In 1976 the ministry also introduced a new currency, the Pula, which made Botswana independent of the South African Rand. Ever since then the Pula has maintained its value and is one of the strongest Third World currencies.

POLITICIAN AND STATESMAN

Between 1965 and 1980 Sir Ketumile Masire managed to excel simultaneously at three jobs (not even counting his farming activities). In the previous chapter we noted his critical role in promoting Botswana's post-independence economic progress as the Minister of Finance and Development Planning. Masire also acted as the BDP Secretary-General until 1980, where he continued to emphasize nuts-and-bolts organizing and also created an ideology for his party. In his third job as Vice-President Masire was Seretse Khama's key partner in the overall running of the nation.

In fact, Masire ran Botswana for long periods as Vice-President, due to Seretse's many long bouts of ill-health. The first time this happened was in August 1968, when Seretse fell ill while at Chobe to open the new game park. Seretse stayed in hospital in Johannesburg for 50 days, giving Masire added responsibility as Acting President. Recalls Masire: "I hardly knew the difference between being Acting President and Vice-President, as Seretse and I were able to work hand-in-glove. I played my role and if he disliked my work he could disapprove, as he was the leader. But most of the time I took no actions that were different from his."

Seretse Khama's faith in Masire had in fact been demonstrated during the first days of BDP government. In 1965, as Deputy Prime Minister, Masire was entrusted with the important task of amending the constitution and other laws in preparation for independence. It was a major effort for several reasons. On the one hand, the document needed to address controversial issues such as the status of tribal mineral rights. Also, by that time nobody had worked out whether Botswana should be a republic. By the end of the year the new document was ready, and the ground had been prepared for the final transition arrangements. When Masire was due to fly to Britain to finalize the independence arrangements, he suggested to Seretse that independence be delayed one year due to the devastating drought which had brought the potential of starvation. By the end of 1965 some two-thirds of the population was already dependent on food aid for survival. Seretse disagreed with Masire, who then in Britain arranged for independence on 30th September 1966, on the date that had previously been celebrated as Protectorate Day.

Throughout his Vice-Presidency Masire had to act as a diplomat frequently. In addition to raising finance for development projects he played a critical role in gaining support for Botswana's position as a small nation struggling in the shadow of racist South Africa. Many people internationally felt that Botswana was little more than a "functional Bantustan" and thus had little time for the new government. But Masire and Khama believed that Botswana's democratic and non-racial status could contribute towards the eventual downfall of racism in southern Africa.

Botswana could not hope to present a strong front to either Rhodesia or South Africa because of its military weakness. The Botswana government had no choice but to prohibit military activity by liberation movements. But when the freedom fighters occasionally used Botswana as a transit point for their activities, Masire differed from many of his government colleagues who looked upon them as "unnecessary nuisances." He tried to back a policy that promoted open dialogue with the liberation movements, rather than open any security relationship with the racist regimes. This policy was resented by the South Africans and Rhodesians, who occasionally sent armed groups into Botswana in order to take action versus members of liberation groups. When Rhodesian troops entered Botswana in February 1978 and killed 15 Batswana soldiers and 2 civilians at Leshoma, it fell to Masire to make a statement to the nation. Reiterating Botswana's "well-known policy of not permitting our country to be used as a springboard for attacks against our neighbours, he condemned the "unprovoked attack" as "the act of an insane regime."

Throughout his Vice-Presidency Masire often had to represent the nation's interests overseas. Due to his ministry's commitment to saving money he was often booked as an ordinary passenger on commercial flights. This occasionally led to the embarrassment of other governments. In January 1969 Masire landed at Addis Ababa to attend the Heads of State meeting of the Organization of African Unity. Along with other passengers he was kept waiting for some time before finally being allowed to disembark, when he found there was no official delegation to meet him. Going to the immigration line, he was quickly placed in quarantine for not having his yellow fever injection. Of course, Masire did not know that the Emperor Haile Selassie had in fact shown up at the airport to meet him. Selassie had sent an official onto the plane, but this man had come back empty after only looking for Masire in the First-Class section. Selassie then departed, only to be called back to the airport half an hour later to greet Masire, who was then rescued from quarantine. "The officer who had told them I was not on board was in trouble," remembers the President. "I had to intervene to save him."

Practically the same experience happened several years later in Zaire, when Masire emerged from economy class just as the Speaker of Parliament was leaving. *"They were very embarrassed. I explained to them that we were a poor country and that we travelled as cheaply as possible and not in First Class. The Speaker told me to reconsider this policy, due to the potential embarrassment it caused to the hosts."*

Masire has vivid memories also of his visit to Germany in March 1970. One afternoon Masire was called into a spur of the moment Cabinet meeting, where it turned out that the negotiations over the vital Shashe mining project had stalled in Germany. Botswana needed to send a delegation immediately, and Masire and his MFPD sidekick Quill Hermans were sent.

Masire then sped home but found that his wife had locked the house and he could not get in. He then hurried off to the airport to make his flight, without having money, passport, change of clothes, or any other personal belongings. He was issued with a Temporary passport. Eventually he and Hermans got to Johannesburg, where the only flight to Europe was to Portugal. They then waited over 12 hours at the Lisbon airport, before getting to Bonn. But there the German customs official refused to let Masire into the country, because the Temporary Passport did not have Masire's German visa in it. "This is not just a back garden you can just walk into," Masire was told.

After several hours of failed attempts to contact government officials, Masire eventually reached the Finance Minister, Helmut Schmidt, who smoothed Masire's way into Germany. Once the business in Bonn was finished the next day, the Botswana finance men had to go to Frankfurt for a second meeting with corporate investors. The party then took up its usual seats in economy class.

After the plane took off, Hermans saw a man walking up the aisle towards the pilot's cabin. "I don't like the look of that guy," he noted. Not long after the plane turned around and went back to Bonn. The captain then told the passengers that an Iranian (the man Hermans had seen) had threatened to blow the plane up. "People on the plane were scared stiff, and so was I," remembers Masire. "The only thing worse was being shot down in Angola [in 1984]."

Eventually the party hired a car to Frankfurt, and completed the rest of their journey without incident.

11. 1969 CAMPAIGN

AS Secretary-General for the BDP, Masire organized his party's campaign for the first post-independence election in 1969. By this time the BDP had a new electoral opponent, the Botswana National Front (BNF), initially formed as a left-wing party composed mainly of former BPP members. But in 1969 Kgosi Bathoen II joined the party, becoming its President. By then Masire's mentor-turned-adversary had become frustrated with government policies that had progressively reduced the powers and autonomy of Chieftainship. For instance, the Tribal Land Act had stripped the Chiefs' powers in land allocation, while the Matimela Act gave government officials control over stray cattle (long a source of royal income). Masire himself viewed the BNF as "an unholy alliance of tribalists, feudalists, and would-be Marxists."

Bathoen's entry into party politics presented the BDP with a formidable challenge in the Southern District. As Kgosi of the Bangwaketse for 41 years he was revered by many of his subjects as a dedicated and effective, if authoritarian, leader. Against the advice of many Masire decided to oppose Bathoen head-on in the Ngwaketse South (Kanye) constituency rather than run for a safer seat. Two bulls were, in effect, thrown into the same kraal. It was a contest about differing visions, as well as between two eminent personalities. Bathoen and traditionalism faced off versus Masire and the new vision of technocratic and democratic government.

The campaigning was tough on both sides. Bathoen was a fervent Pan-Batswana nationalist who had close ties to Tswana chiefs inside South Africa. Many people suspected that he planned to establish ties with the emerging Bophutatswana "homeland". It was alleged that the "key" adopted by Bathoen as the BNF's electoral symbol, stood for his desire to open the border gate at Ramatlhabama and thus fuse Botswana and Bophutatswana. So, in 1969 Masire accused his opponent of favouring a "Tswanastan", which he thought would be "a society in which Chief's rule in barren homelands". Bathoen retaliated by criticizing the government's view of economic progress and urbanization. "Civilization" he told Seretse Khama, "Was the development of one's character and not leaving home to build slums."

Meanwhile, Bathoen openly advocated a closer and more cooperative relationship with South Africa and Rhodesia (though most BNF members did not advocate such measures). While Masire spoke of finding peaceful ways of helping "our oppressed brothers in Rhodesia", Bathoen told the Rand Daily Mail: "We live in a glass house and cannot afford to throw stones." In other press interviews Bathoen said Botswana should concede that South Africa had a common border with Zambia at Kazangula, and also supported South Africa's notorious Immorality Act.

Of perhaps greater significance was the struggle over domestic issues. Masire warned against "the revival of feudal privileges and the reassertion of arbitrary political authority." His BDP manifesto further stated:

"The Chiefs still have a role under the new democratic political order. but it is for them to demonstrate to the people that they are capable of discharging their responsibilities in a manner that is fully compatible with the best interests of the people and the nation....The next BDP government will examine the role of Chiefs, Chief's Representatives, and Headmen in order to devise a system more compatible with popular aspirations and demands for good government."

Whether such issues actually decided the contest is difficult to say. When Masire and Seretse Khama jointly addressed a pre-election rally of some 4,000 people it appeared that "the BDP was still very much intact in Kanye". It thus came as a disappointment when Bathoen actually ended up with 70% of the vote and BNF candidates swept the other two Ngwaketse seats. According to Seretse Khama, the poor BDP showing resulted from "misguided respect and fear", while BPP leader Phillip Matante said that Masire had lost to "feudalism". Masire himself initially believed that "people thought that they were voting to reinstall Bathoen as Chief, while others thought [his son] Seepapitso was being ratified." At any rate it is clear that the Kgosi's popularity had been badly underestimated.

Losing to Bathoen could have been a permanent setback to Masire's career. There was talk of other ambitious politicians, such as Moutlakgola Nwako, using his defeat to leapfrog

ahead of him in the party hierarchy. But Seretse stuck with Masire as Vice-President, MFDP Minister and BDP Secretary-General. Masire was returned to parliament in 1969 as one of the four "Specially Elected" MPs allowed for in the constitution. But even so, Masire's position as No.2 in command was seen as precarious for many years.

Part of the reason for Masire's seeming vulnerability was the fact that as BDP Secretary-General he did not abuse his position to stack party posts and positions with loyal supporters. Indeed, he often appointed people to such posts who were in fact rivals or supporters of his rivals. He was convinced that the BDP could remain strong by including a wide coalition of people, even if they were occasionally at loggerheads. Nor did he ever attempt to pack the MFDP, which was organized to run the national economy and not to support Masire's political ambitions.

Despite its setback in Kanye and several other constituencies, Domkrag won large election victory in 1969, and went on to greater electoral landslides in 1974, and 1979. Some credit for this is due to the fact that under Masire's direction the BDP's organization far outstripped that of its rivals. Although Bathoen had defeated Masire for one seat, he never was able to build up the nationwide support necessary to oppose government policy. Masire was elected to parliament in both of the latter two elections. Avoiding another head-on confrontation with Bathoen he recaptured, and held on to, the Ngwaketse-Kgalagadi seat.

Between 1966 and 1980 Masire also contributed to the BDP's governing philosophy. During the run-up to the 1969 election, Masire introduced into the party manifesto, "the four main pillars" on which the country was to be built. These were unity, self-reliance, development, and democracy with social justice. Outlining these concepts for the first time in public, Masire insisted that "we cannot develop unless we change our society. There was no way to stop change, and the BDP as the "party of the common man" had to, according to Masire, make rural development the cornerstone of its strategy. Calling for land reform, he warned: "We must watch carefully that a few wealthy and influential members of the community do not grab rights over inordinately large areas to the exclusion of the less prosperous."

Today, Masire is proud of his party's achievements, while conceding that it has not always lived up to its ideals.

12. ACCESSION TO HIGH OFFICE

On Sunday 13 July 1980 Masire had the sad task of announcing over the radio that their beloved Seretse had died earlier that morning. In a subsequent address he reassured the bereaved nation:

"The Republic of Botswana has been fortunate that at the time of its greatest need it could call on a man of the stature of Seretse Khama to be its first President. We would have wished for the continued leadership of Seretse Khama for many years, but we can take comfort, and he can take pride, in the fact that the foundations of this country and this nation are well laid and that if we who follow him can continue his task in a rational and constructive way that the future of Botswana is well assured"

Although widely anticipated in the international press, Masire's accession to the Presidency was not a foregone conclusion. Despite the fact that Masire was Vice-President, there was speculation that Moutlakgola Nwako might become the next leader. An ambitious and gifted

politician, Nwako had been among those who had at times questioned the financial austerity of Masire's MFDP. Moreover, he let it be known that he wanted the job if the BDP Parliamentary caucus wanted him.

"It was only after the late President Khama's death that I showed interest in assuming leadership," maintains Nwako. "At that point I offered myself to the party and the nation."

Masire did not personally orchestrate any campaign either for himself or against Nwako. Instead, a number of leading BDP members, such as Englishman Kgabo, began lobbying on his behalf. Their efforts helped create a consensus in favour of the Vice-President.

In the end Nwako when Nwako saw his supporters "wavering", he decided to support Masire as a demonstration of party unity. When the BDP parliamentary caucus finally met only one vote was cast against Masire. Goareng Mosinyi, the BDP veteran from Shoshong, decided to cast a protest ballot for Gaositswe Chiepe. In parliament the rival BNF also voted for Masire as a unifying gesture.

And so concluded the rise of Sir Ketumile Masire, who had moved from his father's cattle post to State House. It was Masire's capacity for hard work that was his formula for success. As Vice-President he toiled long hours every day, usually from about 6am to midnight. He travelled all over Botswana and the world as part of his job, and put in tireless effort to head the successful Ministry of Finance and Development Planning. In addition, he was instrumental in building a party from scratch that has yet to lose an election in three decades.

Throughout his years as Vice-President Masire maintained a reserved, even austere, lifestyle. Whatever spare time he had, which was never much, he continued to spend at his farms, indulging his lifelong passion for agriculture. In those years he commonly drove himself to lands, stopping along the way to assist those stranded by the roadside. A consistent teetotaller, one of his favourite proverbs remained *"Motho a se na ditlhong ga a na botho."* Notwithstanding his elevated position in society, he never forgot the fact that he had joined politics to serve his people.

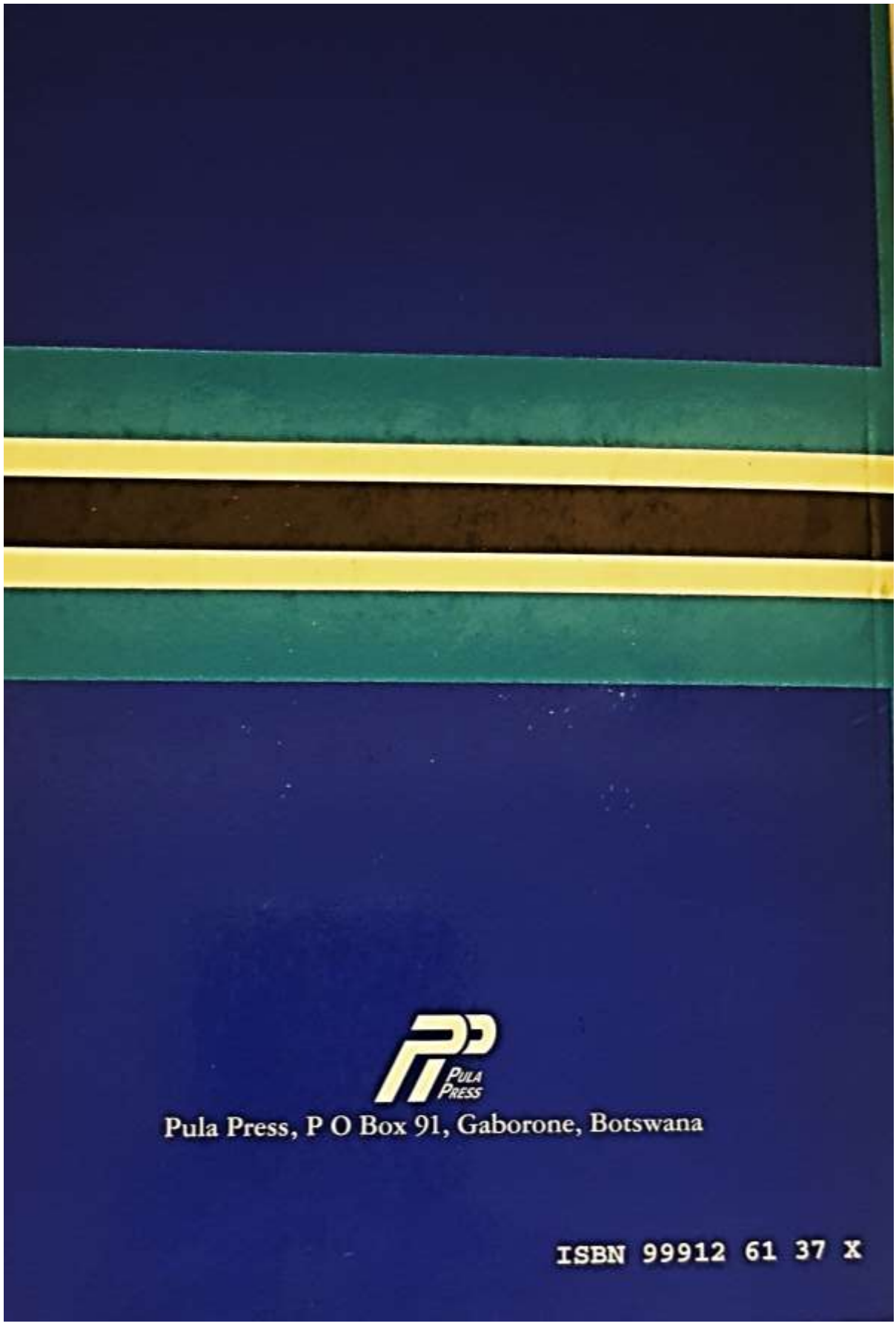
APPENDIX

LIST OF INFORMANTS AND SOURCES OF INFORMATION

We would like to thank the following for our information:
H.E. Sir Ketumile Masire; B.R. Baletloa; Sir Peter Fawcus; Keatlareste David Keatlaretse; Robert Kgasa; Bantsejang Kgopo; Mokwadi Kgopo; Maroka Ledimo; Lawrence Lekalake; Selebatso Masimega; Earl McFarland; Tlonya Mokaila; Bias Mookodi; Doris Kitso Mosiiemang; Motsamai Mpho; Moutlakgola Nwako; Clara Olsen; Neil Parsons; Mmualefhe Raditladi; Bill Seboni; Joe Seboni; Osbert Sedirwa; Serara Selelo-Kupe; Karl Seligmann *and the late Bathoen (II) Gaseitsiwe and Letlole Mosielele.*

In addition, written documents and photographs came from:

Botswana National Archives, Gaborone.
Z.K. Matthews Library, Moeding College, Ootse
Botswana Daily News
Kultwano



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